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ABSTRACT

Thirty training programs for paraeducators in the United States were identified through a literature search and from information gathered at national conferences. A comparison of program purposes and content revealed that, while motivation for program development may be similar among program developers, there is little apparent consensus on content. From a list of almost 40 training topics identified, topics which occurred most often were "behavior management" and "monitoring, assessment, and evaluation." Research and position papers relating to this topic were also identified. Research items consisted largely of surveys of education personnel regarding suitable topics for paraeducator training. "Behavior" management and "assessment" were again among the most frequently occurring topics, reflecting the changing roles and titles of paraprofessional personnel in education. Reasons for these findings are discussed and suggestions made for future research on this topic. It was also noted that less than 50 percent of states were represented by training programs, research, and/or position papers. (Contains 66 references.) (Author/ND)

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Training Programs for Paraeducators in the United States:

A Review of the Literature

Jill Morgan
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Utah State University
1995

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ABSTRACT

Training Programs for Paraeducators in the United States:

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Jill Morgan
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Through a literature search and attendance at national conferences, the reviewer identified 30 training programs for paraeducators in the United States. A comparison of program purposes and content revealed that while motivation for program development may be similar among program developers, there is little apparent consensus on content. From a list of almost 40 training topics identified, topics which occurred most often were *behavior management* and *monitoring, assessment and evaluation*. Research and position papers relating to this topic were also identified. Research items identified consisted largely of surveys of education personnel regarding suitable topics for paraeducator training. *Behavior* management and *assessment* were again among the most frequently occurring topics, reflecting the changing roles and titles of paraprofessional personnel in education. Reasons for these findings are discussed and suggestions made for future research on this topic. It was also noted that less than 50% of States were represented by training programs, research and/or position papers.

Introduction

Paraprofessionals in Education

The use of paraprofessional personnel in education programs in the United States has been common for over four decades, but their numbers have increased dramatically over the last fifteen years. Pickett (1986a) estimated that in Special Education alone their numbers increased from 80,000 in 1979 to over 150,000 in 1986. Numbers have continued to rise steadily, especially with recent calls for inclusion and the attendant increase in the numbers employed in regular education settings. The most recent estimate (Pickett, 1995) is that there are approximately 500,000 paraeducators nationwide, with some 200,000 employed by special education. Their usefulness in education has largely been accepted as self-evident (e.g. Lenz, 1985; Lacattiva, 1985; Pickett, 1986b; Dear, Thurlow & Ysseldyke, 1987), and they are to be found in a wide variety of settings, from regular education, through Title 1, vocational education, speech and occupational therapy to special education, which is their major employer. Reasons given for their use have included shortage of education personnel (Lacattiva, 1985), cost-effectiveness (White, 1987), and the particular needs of rural areas and multi-cultural communities (Lenz, 1985). However, the effects on student learning of utilizing paraeducators in the classroom have not been widely studied (see Dear, Thurlow & Ysseldyke for a review of the impact on the special education instructional process of using adult volunteers). Pickett (1986a) has described them as:

> "the fastest-growing yet most under-recognized, under-prepared and therefore under-utilized category of personnel in the service delivery system."

Changing Roles and Titles

The role of paraprofessional personnel has undergone significant changes over the years (Blalock, 1991), with increasing emphasis on their use as instructional assistants. It has been suggested (Steckelberg & Vasa, 1986) that up to 80 percent of a paraeducator's time may be spent in the delivery of individual or group instruction, and yet typically in the past little or no training has been required of, or provided for those applying for such employment (Frith & Lindsey, 1982). Hofmeister (1991) has referred to approaches used in management and training of paraeducators as a "developing caste system," and expressed concern over the increasing numbers of untrained paraeducators who daily work with students.

The change in the paraeducator's role is reflected in a change in title. Although there is still a wide variety of titles by which paraprofessional personnel are known, the most recent change to 'paraeducator' also reflects the growing awareness of a need to acknowledge the importance of the part which they play in the education process. The terms 'paraeducator' and 'paraprofessional' will be used throughout this article, except where material which uses a different term is directly quoted. Pickett (1981) defined a paraeducator as:

> "a person (1) whose position is either instructional in nature or who delivers direct services to students and/or their parents; and (2) who serves in a position for which a teacher or another professional has ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of individual education programs and other services."

The Need for Training

The need for adequate training for paraeducators has been recognized for many years, and as early as the 1970's, some states (e.g. Vermont, Florida, Kansas) were mandating credentialling and training procedures. Recently the United States Congress (1991, quoted in Striffler, 1993) has recognized their importance and need for training. Increased levels of training have raised issues of differentiated compensation, and have given rise to the establishment of career ladders for paraeducators in some states. However this is not the focus of the current discussion and will not be treated in this review.

Given the decentralized nature of education policy and practice across the United States, training initiatives have almost inevitably been local in origin and implementation. Frith and Mims (1985) suggested that in the same way that professionals suffer from 'burnout' caused by stagnation, a lack of training, and few opportunities for advancement, paraeducators may also become disillusioned and stressed by jobs which have no clearly defined roles or direction. Where they feel unsupported and unrecognized, and where lack of training places them in a subservient role, they too suffer from 'burnout' which is reflected in the generally high turnover rate of paraeducators nationwide. The results of Passaro, Pickett, Latham & HongBo's (1991) study support the view, that a major factor contributing to dissatisfaction among paraeducators is lack of career opportunities -- opportunities which can only arise from structured training and credentialling procedures. Logue (1993) has suggested that failure to analyze retention factors for paraeducators

could be a costly mistake to a State education system, because it would be costly to special education students.

Prior reviews

Reviews of training for paraeducators have been undertaken in the past (Kaplan, 1982; Pickett, 1988a; Coufal, Steckelberg & Vasa, 1991; Morgan & Ashbaker, 1994). Each of these four prior reviews is described briefly below.

Kaplan (1982)

Kaplan's (1982) monograph covers many issues with regard to the use of paraprofessionals in special education - recruitment, career ladders, certification and training. He discusses community colleges as one of the most effective settings for training, and from this discussion, and his conclusions that community college faculty may lose the motivation to continue offering programs to paraeducators, moves on to describe some alternatives. (Interestingly, the debate over community colleges as suitable sites for paraeducator training has recently been taken up again by French and Cabell (1993), who conclude that while community colleges may be able to provide training, that training needs to be flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of school districts, and may be best delivered at school sites rather than on college campuses.) Kaplan's alternatives include two non-profit making agencies , one affiliated with the state education authorities in Arkansas, another totally independent of any official body in Philadelphia; a state funded and governed regional occupation program in California; and a well-developed system of training through junior college courses, established and run directly by the state department of education in Kansas.

Pickett (1988a)

Pickett's (1988a) review of training for special education paraprofessionals is an annotated bibliography of materials and resources.[1] The contents cover training manuals and publications, audio-visual didactic materials, technical assistance and related source materials, and additional sources such as journals , newsletters and professional or advocacy organizations. Each item in the bibliography is briefly described in terms of its intended audience or areas of special education, its content and format. There is also information on cost and contact addresses. The materials are all portable, rather than training courses requiring attendance.

Coufal, Steckelberg and Vasa (1991)

Coufal, Steckelberg & Vasa (1991) conducted a review of the training and utilization trends for paraeducators in speech and language programs. They reported the results of an eleven-state survey of administrators of programs for children with communicative disorders. The increase in numbers of paraeducators working in speech and language programs has followed the general pattern nationwide. Administrators were asked to respond to an eleven-item survey addressing numbers of paraeducators employed, criteria for selection of paraeducators, whether the agency had a written job description and training program for paraeducators, and to rate the importance of some 12 training topics, stating whether they were currently included in paraeducator training.

[1] The Center for Innovations in Special Education (CISE) at the University of Missouri-Columbia offers a loan service for paraeducator materials. Items listed by Pickett (1986) and others included in this literature review are offered on short-term loan at no charge. CISE's list however has not been included in the analysis conducted here, because it duplicates items covered, it is a bibliography rather than training course content, and because an exact description of each item is not always included. Details can be obtained from CISE at Parkside Center, Suite 152, 601 Business Loop, 70 West, Columbia, MO 65211.

Other items dealt with the perceived supervisory duties of teachers, clinicians and administrators. Coufal et al (1991) reported that specified standards for training, utilization and supervision of paraeducators were generally lacking. Training was mostly offered on an in-service basis, and topics covered included roles, legal and ethical issues, general techniques and skills germane to a paraeducator's role, and then skills specific to working with students with communication disorders.

Morgan and Ashbaker (1994)

Morgan & Ashbaker (1994) reviewed content of training programs for special education paraprofessionals only. From a sample of ten training programs from around the United States, they identified a wide variety of topics covered. Although a large percentage of the sample programs included course units on behavior management, teaching strategies and team skills, no topic was common to all programs, suggesting a lack of consensus on suitable content for paraeducator training. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the data, and recognizing that training programs may have been designed for a specific group of paraeducators with very specific roles, Morgan and Ashbaker (1994) recommended that further research be undertaken into both the efficacy of current programs, and the perceived needs of paraeducators.

Whilst all four of these prior reviews offer useful and interesting information, none of them gives a complete and up-to-date picture of current paraeducator training in the United States. Kaplan's (1982) review, written over 10 years ago, is discursive and offers anecdotal evidence from a small number of programs. It discusses service delivery models rather than training content. Pickett's (1988a) review is a bibliography, rather than an

overview of 'live' training, and is restricted to special education. Although Coufal et al (1991) produce a summative analysis of recent data, they looked at training for paraeducators working in the field of communication disorders only, and Morgan & Ashbaker's (1994) review only sampled programs for special education paraprofessionals. The increase in numbers of paraprofessional personnel in education has led to new training programs constantly being developed. Information regarding these new programs would be of interest and use to practitioners and program developers alike, but may not generally be available. The current review seeks to give an up-to-date overview of training for paraprofessional personnel in a range of settings.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this review are, to identify:

1. training programs for paraeducators in the United States, with their stated purpose and intended audience;
2. aspects of training covered;
3. research and position papers relating to this topic.

Procedures

Selection of Items

Items to be included in this review were identified in several ways:

1. through a computer search of the ERIC and PsycLIT databases from 1980 to 1995;
2. through attendance at conferences, in particular the annual conferences of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals;[2]
3. through personal contact with practitioners.

[2] Full title: The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.

4. Reference lists of items identified were also scrutinized for additional information.

The time-span chosen allowed for an examination of the development of the field, and covers the period during which much of the training currently available has been developed. Conferences were a particularly valuable source of information, as they provided current information from practitioners, who do not always publicize their work through any other forum.

Only training programs and research from the United States were included in this review. There may be many training programs available in the United States which have not been included, despite the variety of methods adopted for identifying items. This raises issues which will be discussed later in this paper.

Data Collection

Once items had been identified as described above, they were scrutinized for recommended or actual training content, a composite list of training topics was compiled, and the percentage of items including those topics calculated. This was done for each of the three types of item: training programs, research, and position papers. Tables on the following topics were compiled and will be discussed in this paper: the intended audience, purpose and format of training programs; the focus and advocated training topics of research; and the recommendations made for paraeducator training in position papers.

Some of the information obtained on training programs consisted of only a course overview, and for many, only scant information was available. Research and position papers also often described training under general topic headings, rather than in specific detail. This caused some difficulty in compiling lists of training topics, because of the lack

of specificity of description and because many different terms were used. The initial list of topics identified was discussed with independent education practitioners, in order to reduce the number of topics, by identifying those which could reasonably be considered synonymous. Topics such as *instruction* and *teaching* were treated as a single category (*instruction*), other related topics were combined (e.g. the separate topics of *monitoring*, *assessment* and *evaluation* were combined in one category and given the composite label). This seemed to be necessary on practical grounds, but the possible confounding effects of this action are discussed in a later section.

Results

Training Programs Available

A total of 32 training programs were identified, emanating from 18 States. Table 1 lists each of these programs, its intended audience and stated purpose, and its state of origin. There is no obvious pattern of geographical or demographic split in the distribution of the states where training was found. The most prevalent group for whom the training had been developed was special education (10 programs), followed by English as a Second Language(4), instructional or teacher's aides (4), and a general category of paraeducators/paraprofessionals (6). Other targeted audiences included vocational or rural education, early childhood programs, Title 1, and inclusionary settings. However, the stated purposes of the programs were very similar, with emphasis on meeting the needs of students, satisfying local or federal mandates, and enhancing the skills of the paraeducator. Frequent mention was made of the paraeducator's role as a member of the education or

instructional team. Program formats varied from informal, on-the-job training to college-based credit courses leading to an associate degree.

Training Topics

Table 2 lists training topics and the number (and percentage) of identified programs which included those topics. Thirty-eight topics were identified in all. No topic was cited by all program descriptions. The most frequently cited training topic was *roles and responsibilities* (80%), followed by *monitoring, assessment and evaluation* (69%), *teaming and collaboration* (64%), *instruction* (64%) and *management of behavior* (64%). Only 4 other topics were common to at least 50% of programs, leaving 29 topics covered by less than half of the training programs. The least frequently cited topics were *conferencing* (10%), *advocacy counseling with parents* and *structure of schools*, (13% each). Generally the topics covered a range of what might be considered professional skills, and did not reflect a clerical or housekeeping role for paraeducators.

Research and Position Papers

A total of 10 research papers were identified which addressed the topic of paraeducator training. Table 3 lists each one, the focus of the research undertaken, and the conclusions drawn. Nine of these studies used a survey methodology to collect data on skills required of paraeducators, current levels of paraeudcator performance with regard to these skills, and the perceived need for training. Those surveyed included administrators, teachers, paraeducators and parents, although only one study included all of these (McDonnell & Sewell, 1981). The tenth research paper (White, 1991) contrasted two

Table 1. Characteristics of Sample Training Programs.

Author (date) & State of origin	Target audience	Stated purpose	Program format
Roberts, Hardin, Shephard & Faucette (1980)	Paraprofessionals in vocational education	To develop an understanding of the role of the para-professional in school and community settings, and as a member of a vocational team.	Pre-service and in-service sessions amounting to approximately 15 class hours in the first year.
Glen & McCoy (1981)	Special education paraprofessionals	To train paraeducators to work with handicapped children	Workshops
Los Angeles County (1982) California	Teachers as classroom managers and aides as their instructional resource		3-day seminar for teachers + resource manual which provides information and ideas for conferencing sessions between the teacher and paraeducator
Stile & Gallegos (1982)	Senior citizens who wish to work as special education paraprofessionals	To describe a model for training senior citizens to work as paraprofessionals in rural special education programs.	Workshop with supervised practicum.
Kilcrease (1984)	Paraeducators in rural schools and volunteers	To help meet the challenges of the special educator: lack of funds, support personnel, time and energy; also the diversity of student need.	Personal tutoring by special education teacher in school setting.
Gillis-Olion & Olion (1984)	Early childhood personnel, service agencies and pre-trainers.	To enable personnel to meet the PL94-142 mandate to integrate children with handicaps, by providing successful training.	University campus based course, to be taught mostly to small groups.
Lenz (1985)	Paraeducators working with cross-cultural and English as a 2nd language populations.	To provide an effective educational alternative for early intervention services to culturally different rural communities	One-week training program in effective teaching + on-site inservice training as required.
Steucher, Grossman, Hakala & Kozlowski (1985)	Native American paraeducators	To provide training for Indian paraprofessionals as social work aides to support Indian children (especially the handicapped) in a non-Indian school system.	4-year program with 4 x 2-day workshops per year.
Oklahoma State Department of Education (1985)	Special education paraprofessionals	To provide special education paraprofessionals with a general knowledge of special education, and specific knowledge of handicapping conditions.	Workshop sessions.
Durant, Rivera & Blalock (1989) New Mexico	Paraeducators in public schools	To meet the training needs of paraeducators in the public school system, meet credit requirements of the university, and meet budget and staff constraints of public schools.	Two-hour inservice seminars and workshops - a minimum of 8 for university credit.
Pickett (1990) New York	Special education paraprofessionals	To develop a program of technical assistance to improve the performance, training and assignment of paraeducators	Free-standing materials to be used in lecture, discussion and role-play.

(table continues)

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Author (date) & State of origin	Target audience	Stated purpose	Program format
Chapter 1 Technical Assistance Center, Denver, CO (1991)	Paraeudcators working in Title 1 programs	To increase awareness and skills related to roles of teachers and paraeducators, student thinking and motivation.	Workshop guide for use in a 2-4 hour workshop session.
Charter (1991)	Bilingual paraprofessionals in special education	To prepare bilingual paraprofessionals for use in special education settings.	A variety of formats, preferably pre-service training.
Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (1991)	Paraeducators working with Title 1 students	To assist paraeducators and teachers form a strong instructional team dedicated to helping Title 1 students succeed in the regular program.	Self-instruction handbook.
Gerlach, Pickett, Vasa & Steckelberg (1991)	Paraeducators	To provide teachers and paraeducators with knowledge of theoretical and practical issues related to the paraeducator's role as a member of the instructional team.	Resource manuals and participant workbooks for use in training workshops.
Barresi, Fogarty & Pickett (1992) New York	Special education paraprofessionals	To prepare paraeducators to work in classrooms serving children and youth with disabilities.	Workshop format: 10-hour core course in first year of employment + program specific training.
Archer (1994) Washington	School district para-educators and teachers	To provide training for para-educators in their instructional roles as members of the education team.	Print materials for use in training sessions with both teachers and paraeducators
California State University Long Beach (1994)	Paraprofessionals in vocational, special education and rehabilitation services.	To enable paraprofessionals to develop understanding and skills necessary to work with youth and adults with disabilities.	Certificate program under the University Extension service consisting of 7 modules and a field-based project.
Hofmeister, Ashbaker & Morgan (1994) Utah	Paraeducators	To provide paraeducators with the skills necessary to enable them to effectively assist the classroom teacher.	Video cassette with participant and facilitator manuals.
International Correspondence Schools (1994)	Teacher aides	To prepare teacher aides for work in public, private or parochial schools.	13 home study units to be covered over 9 months minimum.
Lanyon, Webb & Thomas (1994)	Special education paraprofessionals.	To prepare pareducators to work with and integrate children with disabilities.	Community college based course for credit.
Mueller , Marble & Peake (1994) Vermont	Instructional assistants	To offer a specialized and systematic training program for instructional assistants.	Practicum, on and off campus.
Salt Lake Community College (1994) Utah	Paraeducators	To provide coursework and opportunities for practical experiences to individuals who assist special education teachers.	On-site and distance education network classes leading to an Associate degree.

(table continues)

Author (date) & State of origin	Target audience	Stated purpose	Program format
Salzberg, Morgan, Gassman, Pickett & Merrill (1994) Utah	Special education paraprofessionals	To provide paraeducators with knowledge and skills for working with students with disabilities.	Video (tape or disk) presentations for workshop or formal instructional settings
Vassiliou, Mercer & Johnson (1994) North Dakota	Special education paraprofessionals	To develop, expand and modify a comprehensive training curriculum to address the needs of paraeducators	Field-based training in special education units with university credit possibilities.
KACC Paraprofessional Programs (1994) Kansas	Paraeducators working in inclusion settings.	To introduce paraeducators who work with and better include students within disabilities in general education classes.	A one-semester (14 weeks) 3 credit hour course.
Front Range Community College (1994) Colorado	Paraeducators working in integrated settings.	To provide paraeducators with the information and skills necessary to work effectively with students of a range of abilities in an integrated setting.	Community-college based instruction.
Yoakum (1995) Utah	Paraeducators working as interpreters in speech and language programs.	To train interpreter paraeducators to effectively meet the challenges of providing adequate speech and language services to non- or limited-English speaking students.	Workshop sessions.
Vasa & Steckelberg (1994) Nebraska	Gereral and special education para-professionals	To provide adequate training for paraeducators when access to formal training programs is limited.	Self-study/correspondence; group instruction at school site; structured practicum.
Sobocinski & Anderson (1994) Connecticut	Direct care assistants & Urban parents (of at- risk and special education students) as paraprofessionals	To provide competency-based, state-of-the-art training and practical experience for paraprofessionals; and to provide disabled children, youth and adults with significant improvements in the quality of their lives through the competence, consistency and sensitivity of well-trained staff.	11-week cycle: 3 weeks of full-time class attendance, followed by 8 weeks of part-time class and part-time internship, leading to diploma.
Hutchinson-Willmar Regional Technical College (1995) Minnesota	Educational Assistants	To prepare educational assistants to give instructional support to children in daycare centers, preschools, elementary schools, and children or adults with special needs.	48-credit competency-based program, using lecture, observation, lab experience and internship.
Innocenti, Kin & Gutshall (1995) Utah	Teacher assistants in early childhood settings.	To train teacher assistants in early intervention settings to use activity-based or naturalistic interventions.	Training occurs in the context of using a skill when it would naturally be expected to occur. Supervised practice and regular feedback and discussion.

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Table 2. Topics Covered by Training Programs.

Topic	Number (%) of programs including this topic
Most frequently occurring topics:	
roles and responsibilities of teachers and paraeducators	25 (80%)
monitoring, assessment and evaluation	22 (69%)
teaming and collaboration	21 (64%)
instruction	21 (64%)
management of behavior	21 (64%)
effective communication skills	18 (56%)
federal/state law, policy or procedure	17 (53%)
medical, physical, intellectual characteristics of the disabled	17 (53%)
patterns of human growth and development	16 (50%)
Less frequently occurring topics:	
individualized instruction	15 (47%)
role and history of education and special education	15 (47%)
observation and data-recording techniques	14 (44%)
links with parents and the community	14 (44%)
confidentiality and ethics	13 (40%)
inclusion/integration	13 (40%)
objectives goals and expectations	13 (40%)
problem-solving and decision-making	12 (37%)
the IEP process	12 (37%)
local policies and procedures	11 (33%)
health, safety and emergency procedures	11 (33%)
preparing instructional materials	10 (30%)
diversity	10 (30%)
managing the learning environment	10 (30%)
developing/implementing/evaluating instructional or behavioral programs	9 (28%)
classroom operations and procedures	8 (25%)
instructional techniques	8 (25%)
using adaptive/assistive equipment/technology	7 (22%)
family support services/participation	6 (18%)
human rights	6 (18%)
paraeducators professionals structure and development	6 (18%)
organization, planning and record-keeping	6 (18%)
transitions	6 (18%)
social skills and communication for students	5 (15%)
supervision	5 (15%)
student self-esteem and motivation	5 (15%)
structure of schools	4 (13%)
advocacy/counseling with parents	4 (13%)
conferencing	3 (10%)

training and service models for paraeducator training: one traditional with little contact with professionals, and one with a more intensive training and consultative component. The training topics discussed in the research are listed in Table 4. As White's (1991) paper discusses a training model and not topics, it has not been included in the numerical analysis provided by Table 4.

Seven position papers (see Table 5) were identified which discussed specific topics for paraeducator training. These topics are also listed in Table 4. Many other position papers were identified which discussed paraeducator training in more general terms, and several have been already been cited, but Tables 4 and 5 only include papers which specifically discuss training topics. About 9 states are represented in the research (an exact number is not possible as Passaro et al's (1991) paper does not specify which three rural states are included in the survey), and 7 states are represented by position papers, making a total of 13 States, as most of them were represented by both research and position papers. Once topic headings had been discussed as described in the Data Collection section above, 21 topics were identified from both the research and position papers, resulting in a composite list of 26 topics.

As Table 4 shows, the topic most commonly discussed in the research was *behavior management* (88%), followed by *understanding special education students* (66%), *collecting assessment data* (55%) and *presenting new concepts instruction* (55%). The remaining 17 topics discussed in the research were common to less than 50% of research papers. Many of the same training topics were discussed by the position papers,

Table 3. Research Papers: Training for Paraeducators

Author (date) & State of origin	Focus of research	Conclusions with regard to paraeducator training
McDonnell & Sewell (1981)	A survey was conducted of administrators, program specialists, teachers, paraeducators and parents of special education students to determine the role of paraeducators in special education, competencies required of them, the perceived need for training and the desirability of a statewide certification plan. Where?	- 80%+ of respondents stated para-educators should have pre-service, in-service and on-the-job training. - Generic competencies agreed upon were: knowledge of child development, handicapping conditions, laws related to education and confidentiality, the IEP process, roles and responsibilities, curriculum, use of behavioral objectives. - Performance competencies agreed upon were: preparation of materials, carrying out teachers' lesson plans and following schedules, health and safety, classroom management, observing and recording educational information, performing housekeeping, clerical tasks and supervising non-instructional activities - Certification was controversial.
Kelly & Havlicek (1982)	A survey of administrators, teachers and paraeducators in Kansas was conducted to assess the impact of the state-wide training program and to determine attitudes towards paraeduator roles and duties.	- The three most important skills for paraeducators were: working with children, interpersonal relations, and understanding characteristics of special education children. - Paraeducator duties considered of greatest educational importance and most commonly performed were: assisting with group activities, educating individual children, and preparing classroom materials.
McKenzie & Houk (1986)	This study examined how 23 resource teachers perceived a need to modify how paraeducators are used.	- Most frequent roles of para-educators included: reinforce concepts, correct activities, assist with behavior management. - Less frequent roles were: teach new skills, modify written materials, observe/record behavior, assist with daily planning, and conduct formal assessments. - Teachers wished paraeducators to become more involved in observing/recording behavior, conducting assessments, assisting planning.

(table continues)

Author (date) & State of origin	Focus of research	Conclusions with regard to paraeducator training
Frank, Keith & Steil (1988)	Special education teachers and paraeducators were surveyed to identify 1)the tasks that special education teachers rated as important for their paraeducators to be able to complete. 2) the rating teachers gave their paraeducators on those tasks. 3)the tasks which paraeducators felt were important. Where?	- Two tasks were rated as important by all participants: preparing materials, and giving students practice on teacher-taught skills. - Teachers viewed clerical and supervision skills as more important than mainstreaming, direct instruction, or health-related skills. - Teachers rated as important but felt their paraeducators were lacking in skill in: behavior management (elementary), and helping students practice skills taught (secondary). - Paraeducators gave higher importance to preparing materials, presenting new concepts, obtaining assessment data, lesson planning.
Passaro, Pickett, Latham & HongBo (1991)	Two surveys were conducted in three of the most sparsely populated of the United States - the first of special education paraprofessionals, the second of teachers, administrators and other special education personnel. These surveys were designed to identify poaraeeducator training (received and required) and support needs.	- In all 3 states teachers and para-educators rated a wide range of skills as important: instruction, behavior management, and objectives/observation most frequently receiving highest rating. - The most common areas for training requested by paraeducators were: behavior management, roles, and understanding the needs of special education students.
White (1991) Louisiana	Contrasting a commonly-used paraprofessional service and training model, with one which included a more intensive training component in a center-based, inner-city service program for early intervention with children with disabilities	- The two training models were: 1) inservice, minimal contact with professionals, and 2) consultative, using regular and frequent contact with professionals , and "best-practice" strategies. Authors conclude: the less intensive model is preferred as difference in student gains was not significant
French & Cabell (1993) Colorado	A survey was conducted of the perceptions of selected K-12 school district personnel regarding employment conditions and training needs of paraeducators, as well as ideal implementation of training.	- Common responsibilities included academic skills assistance, behavior management, and clerical tasks. -Preferred training focused on skills specific to paraeducator roles rather than mirroring teacher training. - Rural respondents preferred

(table continues)

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Author (date) & State of origin	Focus of research	Conclusions with regard to paraeducator training
French & Cabell (cont.)		generic training. - Urban respondents favored training in more specialized duties and for specific populations. - Preferences seemed to coincide with expanded roles in rural settings and specialized duties of paraeducators in urban settings.
Likins (1993) Utah	A survey was conducted of special education paraeducators to identify areas in which they felt they needed training	- All paraeducators identified behavior management as needed. - 50%+ of paraeducators requested the following training: effective instruction, building self-esteem, job descriptions, differentiated staffing, effective communication, understanding disabilities , computer-assisted technology.
Morgan, Gassman, Salzberg & Jardine (1993) Utah	A survey was conducted of educational personnel (national experts, teachers and paraeducators) across the United States to identify the competencies necessary for paraeducators. Where?	- Teachers & paraeducators identified instructional strategies and behavior management as the most important competencies - Teachers ranked classroom organization third, paraeducators equal third with assessment skills. - Lower priority given to inter-personal communication, student characteristics, assessment, human development.
Wallace (1995) Minnesota	A postal survey was conducted of paraeducators in Minnesota to ascertain their perceived training needs.	- 48% of respondents stated that the training they received was adequate. - 43% stated that training received had no impact on their jobs. - 73% requested ongoing training. - 77% not consulted on training. - 81% felt they should be consulted. - suggestions for inservice: behavior management, student characteristics, training specific to job, communication, orientation, strategies, and medical information. - suggestions for pre-service: job-specific training, characteristics & needs of learners, communication, roles, orientation to district, confidentiality, communication.

Table 4. Training Topics Discussed in Research and Position Papers.

Training topic	Discussed in research (n=9): Number (%)	Discussed in position papers (n=7) Number (%)
most frequently occurring topics		
behavior management	8 (88%0	6 (85%)
understanding special education students	6 (66%)	2 (28%)
collecting assessment data	5 (55%)	5 (71%)
presenting new concepts/instruction	5 (55%)	4 (56%)
less frequently occurring topics		
roles	4 (44%)	2 (28%)
clerical work	3 (33%)	-
interpersonal relationships/communication	3 (33%)	3 (42%)
preparing/developing materials	3 (33%)	2 (28%)
supervision of students	3 (33%)	1 (14%)
child development	2 (22%)	1 (14%)
classroom management	2 (22%)	-
curriculum adaptation/age-appropriate instruction	2 (22%)	1 (14%)
health, safety & medical	2 (22%)	5 (71%)
helping practice skills/ instructional support	2 (22%)	3 (42%)
law, ethics and confidentiality	2 (22%)	3 (42%)
CAI/technology	1 (11%)	3 (42%)
education strategies	1 (11%)	-
IEP's	1 (11%)	-
lesson planning	1 (11%)	1 (14%)
self-esteem	1 (11%)	1 (14%)
working with children	1 (11%)	-
collaboration/teamwork	-	2 (28%)
school policy	-	2 (28%)
extra-curricular activities	-	1 (14%)
parent interaction	-	1 (14%)
integration	-	1 (14%)

and 3 of the 4 most frequently occurring in the research also occurred most frequently in position papers (*behavior management* (84%), *collecting assessment data* (70%), and *presenting new concepts instruction* (56%). The fourth most frequently occurring topic in the position papers (*health, safety & medical*, 71%) is discussed by only 22% of the research papers. The topic of *behavior management* was discussed by almost all papers

Similarities and Differences

A comparison between Tables 2 and 4 reveals that the 4 most frequently discussed topics in the research literature relating to paraeducator training, are all among the topics most frequently occurring in the training programs. *Health, safety & medical,* which figured in a large proportion of position papers (but not research) is also among the most frequently occurring topics in training programs. *Roles and responsibilities,* the most common topic in training programs, figured in less than half of the research, and less than one-third of position papers.

Changes over Time

Although this is a very small body of research, from which it would not be wise to generalize too freely, there is a noticeable trend in the research data with the passing of time. From the results of the Kelly & Havlicek (1982) survey, instructional duties were listed as among the most important of paraprofessional roles, but this was not reflected in the skills identified as important by teachers. Teachers responding to the survey seemed to be more concerned with the paraeducator's ability to develop relationships with, and understanding of special education students. Likewise the results of the McDonnell & Sewell (1981) survey revealed that competence in housekeeping and non-instructional activities was most frequently considered important by teachers. Frank, Keith & Steil (1988) reported that preparing materials and giving guided practice were identified as most important by teachers surveyed, but that pareducators gave higher ratings of importance than teachers, to what might be considered the more professional duties of assessment, teaching new concepts and lesson planning. The teachers' ratings of paraeducator skill in behavior management and guided practice suggested that

Table 5. Position Papers: Training for Paraeducators

Author (date)	State	Title
Frith (1982)	Alabama	Educating Migrant students: The paraprofessional component
McKenzie & Houk (1986)	Kentucky	Use of paraprofessionals in the resource room
Learn (1988)	Pennsylvania	Supervision of paraprofessional workers in special needs vocational education.
Pickett (1988)	New York	The employment and training of paraprofessional personnel: A technical assistance manual.
Blalock (1991)	New Mexico	Paraprofessionals: Critical Members in our special education programs.
O'Rourke (1991)	Kansas	Community college pre-service training for paraprofessionals and related services personnel in rural Kansas.
Pickett, Vasa & Steckelberg (1993)	New York & Nebraska	Using paraeducators effectively in the classroom.

paraeducators needed more training in these areas, although the majority of teachers had not listed these tasks as being of essential importance. (This suggests some confusion in the minds of teachers, if they are requiring that paraeducators demonstrate competence in skills which are not part of their role.) The results of the Morgan et al (1993) survey indicated that the focus of paraeducator duties had shifted to include the need for behavior management and instructional skills. This trend is supported elsewhere in the literature (Blalock, 1991) on the changing role of the paraeducator, and is also borne out by the Passaro et al (1991) and Likins (1993) survey results, which reported that paraeducators were requesting training in these more specialized areas.

Discussion

A number of issues arise from the results reported above, and each is discussed in relation to the objectives of this review.

Training Programs

The number of training programs identified is relatively small, particularly in light of the fact that some states are represented more than once, by programs designed for different populations (e.g. early childhood or special education). The total figure of 32 training programs represents only 18 states. Is this an indication of lack of training in the unrepresented states, or of a lack of dissemination? It may be an reflection of the limitations of the literature search for this review. Attendance at conferences and personal contacts has suggested that there are several states (e.g. Texas, Florida, Hawaii) which have active paraeducator training programs, but no more specific information was available through the sources used for this review. Other States who are not represented in this review may have not yet recognized the need for paraeducator training, or have not yet made a commitment to it.

This also begs the question, whether the sample of programs included in the review are representative of the larger population of programs in use in the United States. Representativeness of sample is difficult to gauge, even when randomization is used as a basis for selection. Where studies are based on readily available samples, as in this review, the question is almost impossible to answer. The fact that Utah is so well represented, for example, may just be a reflection of the fact that the author is currently resident in that State. However, part of the purpose of a review such as this is to ascertain what information is readily available to those who may be developing training programs. Materials which are not readily available are of almost no use to program developers, the experience which those materials represent is therefore not shared, and work is more likely

to be duplicated. Florida and Texas were cited in the paraeducator training literature as far back as the 1970's. Their twenty years of experience and development would be valuable to those who are only now beginning to develop training programs, but that information does not seem to be easily accessible.

As noted above, almost one-third of the training programs identified were developed for special education paraprofessionals. Special education has been a major employer of paraeducators, and funding has been made available for developing both training and credentialling procedures for them. Many of the basic training components are applicable across the board, and would be useful to those who train paraeducators for regular and other education settings. The small number of training programs developed specifically for Title 1 paraeducators is somewhat surprising, as Title 1 is also a major employer of paraprofessional personnel, and has had its own funding source. However, as their role is almost exclusively instructional in nature, there may be less need for training specific to this group. In addition, as with many paraeudcators, a great deal of training may occur in in-service or on-the-job settings, with no formal materials developed, published and/or widely disseminated.

Training Topics

In the section relating to data collection procedures, the point was made that training program descriptions used a variety of terms, many of which could be considered synonymous. Some of these synonyms are fairly obvious (e.g. *teaching* and *instruction*, *assessment* and *evaluation*), but the lack of specificity makes others equivocal (e.g. Does *individualized instruction* only describe basic principles, or does it teach paraeducators to

individualize instruction, in which case it may be synonymous with *developing/ implementing evaluating instructional programs*?). Other topics naturally seemed to belong together (e.g. *health, safety* and *emergency procedures)* and were often listed that way. However, there were many which were open to interpretation and personal preference. Should *record-keeping* be included with *data-collection* or *organization*? Does *effective communication skills* include communication by paraeudcators with students and other adults, or is it a different category from *social skills and communication for students*? The initial list of topics was condensed for reasons of practicality, but the resulting selection was unavoidably influenced by the author's personal interpretation. Other education practitioners were consulted in an attempt to moderate this bias, but the same condensing process had already been carried out in most cases by the program developers who wrote the program descriptions. A reviewer is often attempting to read minds, and the reader may feel that a different interpretation could have been placed on terms used. These issues, of course, also apply to topics discussed in research and position papers.

The topics most common to the training programs reflect a view of the paraeducator as a integral part of the instructional team, with competency in a wide range of skills. This is very much in keeping with the most recent research on both the changing role of paraeducators (Blalock, 1991) and the training requested by them (e.g. Likins, 1993). A brief scan of the topics which have been covered by the training programs over the years shows a shift of focus, with topics such *as Instructional techniques, organization, planning & record-keeping* and *Social skills and communication for*

students figuring much more frequently in recent than in previously developed programs. *Diversity*, *Transitions* and *Using adaptive assistive equipment technology* also did not begin to appear in training programs until the early 1990's, and this is consonant with the increased emphasis placed on these areas by the education community. In addition to the change in topics, there is a noticeable increase in the number and diversity of topics covered in training programs between the 1980's and 1990's, with a much wider range of skills and broader knowledge base being required of paraeducators. This of course has implications for the amount of time which needs to be allocated to training, as well as the expertise of training personnel. Although college-based training was already being proposed by Gillis-Olion & Olion as far back as 1985, the number of training programs offered for college credit and at college sites has increased over the years, and this may well be a reflection of the depth of training now being offered. Workshop and portable materials have continued to be produced, however, presumably reflecting the need for individual training specific to a particular role, as well as the constraints of rural communities and individual schools.

The lack of consensus over training topics could be considered a symptom of confusion prevailing in the field of paraeducator training. The more optimistic view is that roles differ so widely that no single training program or list of topics would meet the needs of all paraeducators. Morgan & Ashbaker's (1994) review indicated that even among special education training programs, there was no absolute consensus as to training topics. Again, this suggests that within this group of paraeducators, roles and requirements differ, both on the basis of job description and local mandate.

Some topics were notable for their absence from many training programs, research and position papers. *Roles and responsibilities*, which was the most common topic, is a case in point. It seems self-evident that training needs to be discussed in the light of paraeducator roles, so that this topic is really unavoidable. But this may in fact explain its absence from 20% of training programs and over 50% of research and position papers: it is so obvious a topic, that it is included in the introductory portions of training courses, and has therefore not been included as a specific training topic. Also, although *monitoring, assessment and evaluation* was a topic common to 69% of training programs, *observation and data-recording techniques* was common to only 44%. Logic suggests that paraeducators need training in observation and data-recording in order to monitor, assess and evaluate. However, the one may well have been subsumed in the other, explaining the apparent discrepancy in frequency of occurrence.

Research and Position Papers

It is interesting to compare the States from which research, position papers and training programs emanate. The link between research and training is an important one, and yet only one state (Kansas) is represented by all three types of items, and only four other States (California, Colorado, Minnesota and Utah) would appear to have produced both research and training programs (although there may be others included in Passaro et al's (1991) study, as mentioned above). Position papers need not be discounted as a basis for developing training, as opinions expressed are often based on practical experience, even if empirical evidence is not offered. A further 5 States (Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania and Washington) were identified as having produced both

position papers and training programs. This leaves 8 States where training programs were identified, but for which no research or position papers were found. Program developers may well have made use of research produced and published by other States, as well as conducting informal research in their own education community, before producing training programs for their paraeducators, but this does at least serve as a reminder of the importance of training based on established, local need as well as sound general practice.

Ten of the 32 training programs identified were produced in the 1980's, the remaining 22 having been produced in just the first half of this decade. Four of the 10 research papers were written in the 1980's, the remaining 6 in the last 5 years, so that these proportions are comparable with the training programs. Four of the 7 position papers were published in the 1980's. This is a logical trend: that position papers, based on experience and thoughtful consideration of the then current situation should precede empirical research, and that this research should be followed by the development of training programs.

Conclusion

In summary, 32 training programs, 10 research items and 7 position papers were identified through the literature search and other sources used for this review. The training programs were designed for delivery in a range of formats to paraprofessional personnel working in a variety of settings. Despite the possible limitations of this review, several points of note can be made. Of the large number of training topics covered by the programs, no one topic was common to all, although *behavior management* came closest to consensus. This is in keeping with the most recent research on the changing role of the

paraeducator, from largely clerical duties to that of a member of the instructional team (which was also reflected in changes in topics covered over the years), and the wide variety of roles represented by the term 'paraeducator.' No research or position papers were identified for many of the states which had produced and published training programs, raising the issue of the importance of using research data as a basis for development of training. However, this also highlights the usefulness of a literature review, which helps to disseminate information and raise awareness of available resources for those who are currently involved in producing and conducting training for paraeducators.

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